

Motivational Factors On Knowledge-Sharing Behaviour Among Staff at Sarawak State Library

Nur Azmira Binti Mohd Noor, Nurul Nadirah Binti Mohd Zuhana & *Arenawati Sehat Binti Haji Omar

Faculty of Administrative Science & Policy Studies, UITM Sarawak Campus Samarahan 2, Sarawak, Malaysia

Email of corresponding author: azmira.mohdnoor@gmail.com

Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to examine the influence of motivation on knowledge-sharing behaviour among staff at Sarawak State Library. The purpose of the study is to ascertain the extent of knowledge-sharing among the staffs at the library. In many organizations, employees' knowledge has been a critical resource, and if it is not properly shared, the organization will lose their most vital assets. However, sharing of knowledge depends on the individual itself. Some people may agree to share the knowledge and some may not mostly due to their personal reasons. Therefore, one's direction to behaviour plays a pivotal role to the success of knowledge-sharing behaviour. What makes individual to share their knowledge is actually the core question. This study employs Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as a conceptual framework to examine employees' motivation and knowledge-sharing behaviour. Motivational factors are regarded as a foundation behind people's decision whether to share their knowledge. It has a long root in library practice in terms of knowledge-sharing. Sarawak State Library which is known as the state library is the perfect spot for exchanging the knowledge since it consists of large range of knowledge. Hence, by perceiving the motivational factors, more individuals will be assisted to exchange information and knowledge in order to integrate effective knowledge-sharing behaviour environment throughout the libraries.

Keyword: *motivation, knowledge, knowledge-sharing behaviour, Sarawak State Library, library*

Introduction

Motivation is one of the prior factors that leads to the sharing of knowledge (Ozlati, 2012). This topic attempts to examine the relationship of motivation towards knowledge-sharing behaviour which focusing that knowledge is to be shared and not to be kept by oneself. Knowledge sharing can be defined as the transference of knowledge either tacit or explicit from an organization, group or individual to another (Osmani, Mohd Zaidi and Nilashi, 2014). When knowledge is shared, people tend to preoccupied themselves with other knowledge that beyond their capabilities. So, knowledge is crucial for creating an intangible asset within the organization and upon that, organization are able to be more effective and efficient towards customers (Merlo *et al.*, 2006 cited in Reychar and Weisberg, 2014). This paper aims to address the question of what actually motivates people to share knowledge.

Generally, when it comes to knowledge sharing, there are two types of individuals which are the people who are willing to share and people who hoard their knowledge (Aliakbar *et al.*, 2012). Those who are hoarding their knowledge mostly have the exact same reason which they tend to think that they will lose their most valuable asset and worried that other people will be rewarded without crediting them. Thus, this statement really proved that knowledge-sharing is a choice of oneself and cannot be forced (Ozlati,

2012). In other words, the action of sharing the knowledge is depending on the individuals themselves. To support more, according to Staples and Webster (2008), it appears that employees may not always be motivated to share their knowledge.

Hence, this has come to attention that the main reason individuals to share their knowledge is the expectation and impression to be seen as skilled, knowledgeable or respected (Mohammad Hossein *et al.*, 2012). Meaning to say, motivation is crucial in order for employees to share knowledge as it may enhance the organization to keep the assets for future use. It is understood that most of the time, there are reasons why people share knowledge and what motivates them to share the knowledge. All is because of the motivation that lies beneath them. Motivation is somewhat the key that will lead to successful knowledge-sharing process (Ardichvili, A. *et al.*, 2012).

In conclusion, this topic prompts individuals to actually oblige in sharing the knowledge. The reason is due to the fact that knowledge-sharing actually give more benefits than pitfalls. Individuals should require motivation to exchange the knowledge in order for the organization to gain competitive advantage (Merlo *et al.*, 2006).

Literature Review and Concept

Knowledge-Sharing Behaviour Concept

Knowledge-sharing can be defined as a process of creating, acquiring, synthesizing, learning and experiencing in order to achieve organizational goals (Osterloh and Frey, 2000). This knowledge can either be located in the heads of individuals or in form of documents and journals. Data and information are linked with knowledge, however, they are not the same. This is consistent with Russ-Eft and Preskill's (2001) study cited in Ozlati (2012) which noted that knowledge is integrated when only the data and information are analyzed. Most knowledge that is located in the employees' heads are seen as the intangible assets that walk around the company every day. Hence, it is very much necessary to preserve the people in the organization because they are valuable as they that holds a large amount of knowledge and skills.

Sharing of knowledge is a transference of knowledge either explicit or tacit from organization, group or individual to one another (Osmani, Mohd Zaidi & Nilashi, 2014). Tacit knowledge is knowledge that is located in individuals' mind which consist of deep thoughts and beliefs (Osterloh and Frey, 2000). In other words, an excellent organization must require employees to have same mental models. Same mental models are similar to "know-how" knowledge as it allows them to set their brain to achieve organizational goals. As mentioned by Townley (2000) cited in Onifade (2015), if tacit knowledge is held by the librarians, they could share it with one another and hence, more effective knowledge-sharing environment will be developed. One can presume then that libraries are the ideal place to gain useful knowledge when needed (Onifade, 2015). In contrast, explicit knowledge is knowledge that has been codified and digitized in books, documents, reports and forth (Nonaka, 1994). For example, explicit knowledge that is stored in online database will make it easier for employees to get involve in knowledge sharing as the knowledge is documented and articulated. Combination between tacit and explicit knowledge will actually provoked the organization to expand its knowledge.

In this era of globalization, our economy has largely transformed into knowledge-based economy (Ologbo *et al.*, 2015). Knowledge-based economy implies the organizations to broaden their intellectual capital, hence, helps them to increase their work capability. Upon that, libraries around the world would also need

drastic changes as well (Lee, 2000 cited in Onifade, 2015). It is to be the center for learning and knowledge-sharing that should be made widely available to all people. However, Jantz's (2001) study stated that many library settings have lack integration of knowledge-sharing and it is difficult to make knowledge available to each of the staffs. As a result, they carry the knowledge they have when they decided to quit the job. This is true as Parirokh *et al.* (2006) further supported that knowledge-sharing initiatives have not been formalized in many libraries, hence, knowledge-sharing activities have always been held on an informal basis (Maponya, 2004).

According to Ozlati (2012), knowledge-sharing is an asset that can be transformed into new services and products that can increase profits to organizations. With the effective use of knowledge, organizations may encourage its employees to develop more skills and sustain their competitive advantage. This is in-line with the study by Renzl (2008) where knowledge is an organization's most valuable resource as it represents intangible assets, routines and creative processes which is hard to imitate. Exchanging of knowledge will actually help employees to grow and be more innovative as it is said that innovation plays a prominent role in determining the long term survival of organizations. Hence, knowledge-sharing is pivotal in enhancing employees' work productivity.

According to the study by Aliakbar *et al.* (2012), knowledge-sharing is a process meant to obtain experience from others. Organization should create a sharing culture as well as making it as a good habit among people in the firm so that more information and knowledge could be created and can be reused in the future. When employees believe that knowledge that they shared will be beneficial to the organization, they will be inspired to practice it more. However, human behaviour is inevitable when it comes to sharing valuable information. This is contrast with Staples and Webster's 2008 statement which noted sharing of knowledge is a personal choice and getting individuals to share their knowledge is difficult. In certain situation, knowledge hoarding behaviour among employees might exists. Some employees might reluctant to share their knowledge because of the fear of losing one's unique values. Despite that, they may not always be motivated to share their knowledge because they think that they will remember everything and afraid of not being credited.

Definitions of knowledge-sharing behaviour varied from various researchers. It is important for people to have good understanding about what knowledge-sharing behaviour actually is, especially for people in an organization which requires effective flow of information in order to remain successful and competitive in the market.

Motivation Based on Self-determination Theory

Self-determination Theory proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000) is one of the framework in studying knowledge-sharing motivation. This theory is a method to human motivation and personality that uses experiment and observation rather than theory (Ryan *et al.*, 1997 cited in Ryan and Deci, 2000). Its field is the analysis of the basis for self-motivation and personality integration which are people's inherent growth tendencies and intrinsic psychological needs, and includes the conditions that nurture those process (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Motivation is not a single concept and it is a variety alternating from extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. People who are motivated intrinsically will be performing their task because of the enjoyment and satisfaction of doing it whereas people who expect external rewards for their performance usually have least autonomy (Ozlati, 2012). Intrinsic motivation is internal and self-directed where people will be doing something for the inherent enjoyment and satisfaction of the activity itself while extrinsic motivation is where people will be doing something to obtain some separable outcome. Based on relative autonomy, there are a number of extrinsic motivation types (Ozlati, 2012).

Based on Self-determination Theory, it is proposed that there are four types of motivational reasons which are external, introjected, identified, and intrinsic (Ryan and Connell, 1989 cited in Ryan and Deci, 2000). External reasons are when behaviour is explained by external reasons, fear of punishment, or rules and regulations obedience. Introjected reasons are when people do something for internal reasons or esteem-based pressures to act for example, as avoidance of guilt or concerns with self-approval and other-approval. Identified reasons are when one does something from his or her own values or goals. Intrinsic reasons are when one does something for the sake of enjoyment and satisfaction of doing it.

Motivation and Knowledge-Sharing Behaviour Association

According to the study by Husted and Michaivola (2002) cited in Onifade (2015), most of people in the organization tend to hoard their knowledge, but, if the right environment is created, more people will actively share their knowledge. The survival ability of an organization merely depends on important attributes which are knowledge and knowledge management (Aswath and Gupta, 2009). Therefore, motivation for knowledge-sharing behaviour is very crucial especially in the library as it is a suitable environment for the integration of a good knowledge management. As a result, when people practice knowledge-sharing behaviour, they will become expert in applying the knowledge magnificently thus helping them to serve better products and services (Aswath and Gupta, 2009). In this 21st century, libraries are experiencing extreme changes and tend to be the learning as well as knowledge facilities for their clients and people. So, with such environment, people are more comfortable to participate in sharing of knowledge activities as there is existence of culture and set of behaviours in the library itself (Lelic, 2001). Further supported by Aghoghovwia's (2004) study which noted that knowledge management can be one of the values that can gain satisfaction from the customer. Hence, when people voluntarily share their knowledge, in return, others will eagerly gather the knowledge shared (Liao *et al.*, 2007). All in all, it is very important for the libraries to motivate their staffs to exercise knowledge-sharing behaviour as the association between motivation and knowledge-sharing behaviour is a critical factor that should be acknowledged by them.

Studies of knowledge-sharing motivation have always resulted in different conclusions which give people a number of guiding theoretical framework. Several studies proposed that people share their knowledge for personal outcomes (Hsu *et al.*, 2007) whereas in Chiu *et al.* (2006)'s study stated that people share their knowledge for community-related outcome expectations. For example, by helping the virtual community to gather its knowledge and carry on with its operation (Ozlati, 2012). Other than that, expectation of being seen as skilled, knowledgeable, or respected are the main reasons individuals share their knowledge (Butler *et al.*, 2002). They have the motivation to share knowledge because they think that by sharing knowledge, other people will have a positive impression about them. Furthermore, the expectation of respect, inspiring knowledge, looking for support, and cultivating self-esteem and self-worth are also reasons for individuals to share their knowledge (Zhang and Hiltz, 2003 and Hsu and Lin, 2006). This statement is in line with the finding by Butler *et al.* (2002). On the other hand, finding from study conducted by Zhang *et al.* (2009) cited in Ozlati (2012) shows that people do not share knowledge because of reputation which is contrast with statement noted by Butler *et al.* (2002). Therefore, there is no specific reasons agreed by individuals on why they share their knowledge.

Moreover, knowledge-sharing has inconsistent relationship with extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. In a study conducted by Zhang *et al.* (2009) cited in Ozlati (2012), extrinsic rewards affect knowledge-sharing positively. People will be more eager to share their knowledge as there are extrinsic rewards by the organizations. This is opposing with Bock and Kim's (2002) study, which showed that attitude of sharing

knowledge is negatively affected by expected rewards. On the other study of Bock *et al.* (2005), it showed that extrinsic rewards had no effects on individual's attitude towards sharing their knowledge but it is driven by anticipated reciprocal relationships. This is contradictory with the first study conducted by Bock and Kim (2002). Furthermore, knowledge-sharing behaviour and willingness to share knowledge in individuals are both having intrinsic motivation as their strongest forecaster, compare to extrinsic rewards (Liu and Fang, 2010). Another study conducted shows that intrinsic motivation which is represented by organizational citizenship behaviour in the study, was a strong motivating factor to initiate the behaviour of knowledge-sharing whereas extrinsic rewards effect on an individual's knowledge-sharing intention is moderate (Amin *et al.*, 2011).

This clearly indicates that there is no specific explanation on what really motivates individuals on sharing their knowledge. To be specific, outcomes of studies about knowledge-sharing motivation are rarely in line with each other. Therefore, it is important to have motivational framework in order to apply knowledge-sharing in organizations.

Conclusion

The review of the literature has highlighted the relationship between motivation and knowledge-sharing behaviour among employees in the workplace. To understand the concept of knowledge-sharing behaviour, it has become clearer with the various types of motivation proposed by various researchers. Based on motivation theory, Self-determination Theory (SDT) will be used as a framework in studying people's motivation to their knowledge-sharing behaviour. Ryan and Deci (2000) clearly stated that motivation has direct influence towards knowledge-sharing behaviour. This is especially true given that motivation does not stand alone, but, consist of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Despite the highly undeniable value of knowledge-sharing behaviour in the workplace in today's current era of globalization, motivation cannot be left behind as one of the important and precious values for achieving organizational objectives and for the organization to remain competitive in the market. Thus, the relationship between motivation and knowledge-sharing behaviour is crucial to be understood as to maintain the sustainability of the organization.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank and express our gratitude to Allah on His blessings and guidance. With His help, we are able to successfully completed this manuscript without facing too much difficulties and problems. The completion of this manuscript could not have been possible without participation and assistance of all parties involved which had kept us motivated even though there were situations when things did not go as planned. We would like to give special thanks to our research supervisor, Madam Arenawati Sehat Binti Haji Omar for her guidance, endless support and patience during the process of completing this manuscript. Her mentorship is truly such an amazement as well as inspiration to us. Our appreciation goes to all relatives, friends and others who directly and indirectly give their hands and support during the process of completing this manuscript.

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